



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 24, 2016  
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee  
Presented By Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen

**House Bill No. 5316 (Raised) – AN ACT CONCERNING SPORT FISHING LICENSES FOR ANGLERS WHO ARE SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **Raised House Bill No. 5316 – AN ACT CONCERNING SPORT FISHING LICENSES FOR ANGLERS WHO ARE SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.** The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

We appreciate the Committee's willingness to raise this bill at the request of the DEEP. This proposal, which we strongly support, would update fishing license fees to reflect the changing demographics of Connecticut's population (due to "baby boomers" getting older) by replacing the current free annual fishing for resident anglers age 65 and older with a minimal annual fee for those individuals who turn age 65 on and after January 1, 2017. Under this proposal, annual fishing licenses for resident anglers who turned age 65 before January 1, 2017 would continue to be free.

The percentage of the population made up of people over age 65 is increasing. Additionally, people are generally staying active well into their retirement years. Connecticut's total population was relatively unchanged from 2000 (3.41 million) to 2013 (3.59 million), but the proportion of individuals age 65 and older in Connecticut increased during this time and the proportion of individuals in the 50-64 age groups showed an even greater increase (from 15.7% to 21.2%). In 2013, there were 227,000 more individuals in the 50-64 age group than in 2000 (from CT Department of Public Health population estimates).

Fishing license sales show a similar, but more pronounced trend, as fishing license sales from 2010 to 2014 to individuals under age 65 were relatively consistent (from 156,400 in 2010 to 158,800 in 2014) but the number of age 65 and older license holders increased by over 10,000, a 50% increase, from 19,600 individuals in 2010 to 30,600 in 2014.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See age distribution chart.

Connecticut is currently one of only 10 states in the country with a free license for individuals as young as 65 years of age. The other 40 states offer seniors either reduced rates, generally beginning at either age 65 or age 70, or some version of a lifetime license with an initial onetime fee, or both. In the Northeast, New York offers a reduced fee license at age 70 and Pennsylvania offers a lifetime license with an initial onetime fee or a reduced rate annual license to individuals age 65 and older. Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont offer lifetime licenses (with variable fees based on age of purchase in Maine and New Hampshire). MA offers a free license at age 70 and Rhode Island offers a free license at age 65.<sup>2</sup>

This proposal also corrects a drafting error in 2014 legislation by providing a 50% reduction in permit, tag and stamp fees for individuals under the age of 16. Although PA 14-201 reduced the rate for permits, tag and stamp fees, this reduction was inadvertently restricted to 16 and 17 year olds, leaving younger hunters and their families paying full price for their various permits, tags and stamps.

In summary, DEEP strongly supports **House Bill No. 5316 – AN ACT CONCERNING SPORT FISHING LICENSES FOR ANGLERS WHO ARE SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER** as it would more equitably distribute the cost of fish and wildlife programs among users, provide long-term stability in license revenues, and provide more accurate enumeration of the number of active anglers and hunters age 65 and older.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or [Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov](mailto:Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov) or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or [Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).

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<sup>2</sup> See senior fishing license map & table.